

# HISTORY OF FAIR CHASE

## TROPHY TALK



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The concept of fair chase can be traced to the beginning of the Boone and Crockett Club. The first time it appeared in American writing was in the Club's constitution adopted in February 1888. How did it become tied to records entry, and why does the principle still matter today? This column has historically served as the document of record to Official Measurers (OM) on Club policy updates, and it will continue to do so. As we grow our ranks of members, it also provides a forum to discuss in depth some records rules and their history. This allows our OMs to better their knowledge of the system and gives newer readers insight into why big game records are a conservation tool. An entry is not just a rank in a book but rather a page in the annals of conservation successes and failures. Together, records are one chapter documenting the success of the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation. It is a data point proving that scientific management and public ownership of wildlife continue to be the best conservation model anywhere in the world.

Originally, records served as a tool to obtain the greatest specimens of big game to be placed in the Bronx Zoo and document what once inhabited the continent. The National Collection of Heads and Horns was dedicated to the vanishing big game of the world, and it was feared in short order this hall of mounts would be the only place to see what once roamed this great continent. The records book would serve as the scientific record of what once inhabited these lands.

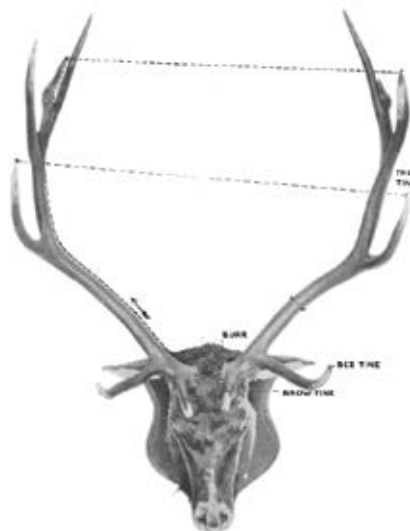
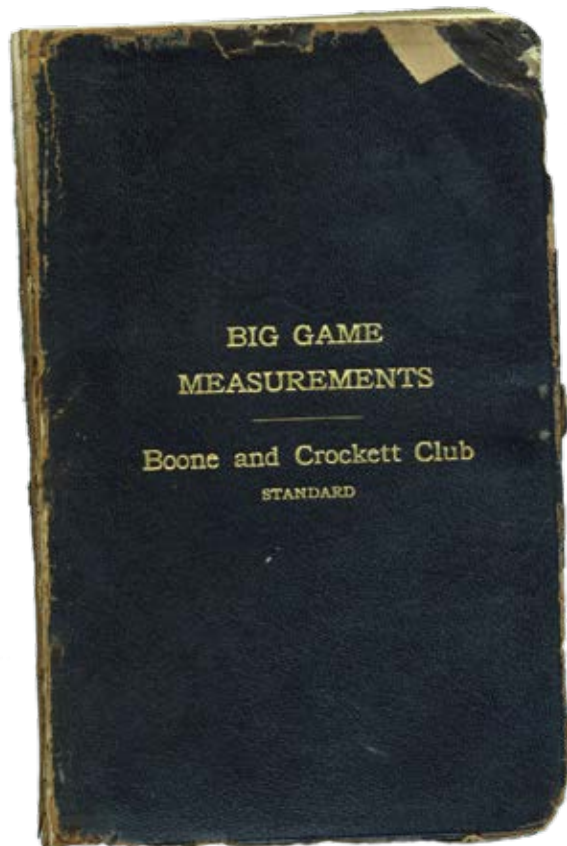
The Club's first scoring book was a 1906 field manual containing basic measurements and served as a field journal to the naturalist hunters of the day. B&C published the first two record books in 1932 and 1939. The Club created these volumes under the auspices of the National Collection of Heads and Horns. It is important to remember that at this time, Club members were trying to see what was still out there. While the Club had a requirement that each member must hunt in fair chase, there were no requirements on the entry of trophies. Club members' writings promoted the idea of fair chase and worked to sway public opinion on the proper or sporting method to hunt, though the records were just that.

WWII consumed the country's full attention through the early 1940s. Beginning in 1947, records began transforming into the version we know today. This was the year of the first big game competition, which in the 1970s would be renamed Awards Programs to describe more accurately what we intended to do with these celebrations. Once the 1947 competition concluded, an equitable and repeatable system was needed that would rank trophies. This topic had been written about in previous records books, with authors expressing their desire to develop a system, though this program made the need even more evident. A committee was appointed, and work began on combining the systems published by Grancel Fitz and another by James "Jimmy" L. Clark, both involved with the Club. B&C released the new system in 1950, and all trophies previously scored had to be re-scored.

Conservation was working as states continued developing their game departments and seasons. Entries were increasing, and wildlife was coming back. Management had reversed the downward trend of our large game species. As the committee wrestled with minimum scores and

The stated purpose of the book *Big Game Measurements* was to put into practice a uniform standard of measurements of the large game of North America. Members were encouraged to record the measurements of the game they harvested and send the information in to the Club's secretary. The scoring system described in this book, which is different from the one used today, was devised by Club members Theodore Roosevelt, Caspar Whitney, and Archibald Rogers in 1902.

Own your own replica of the 1906 *Big Game Measurements* book! See page 42.



Length on Outside Curve . . . . .	471 inches
Circumference between Bees & Toss . . . . .	61 "
Tip to Tip . . . . .	496 "
Greatest Width . . . . .	492 "
Number of Points . . . . .	6 + 5

other questions, they required a statement of fair chase to be signed by hunters in 1963.

In the 1964 records book, Robert M. Ferguson authored a short chapter on fair chase and its importance to the Club and records. He stated that in the Club's very first publication, *American Big Game Hunting* (1893), Theodore Roosevelt set forth the philosophy of fair chase as follows:

The term "fair chase" shall not be held to include killing bear, wolf, or cougar in traps, nor "fire hunting" nor "crusting" moose, elk, or deer in deep snow, nor killing

game from a boat while it is swimming in the water.

This definition held for over 70 years before the internal combustion engine reduced wilderness miles to minutes of travel time. "Now all this has changed," Ferguson wrote. "The unconscious acceptance of modern devices, especially in the field of transportation, is too often accompanied by a deterioration in fair chase."

After studying the increased use of airplanes, jeeps, and outboard motors, the Club voted to add to Roosevelt's previous definition that "spotting or herding game from the air or landing

in its vicinity for pursuit shall be deemed unfair chase and unsportsmanlike. Herding or pursuing game from motor powered vehicles shall likewise be deemed unfair chase and unsportsmanlike."

They also voted that any trophy entered after 1963 must be accompanied by a signed affidavit stating it was taken in fair chase. The signature requirement on this document continues to this day for entry.

In its original form, the idea of fair chase, or the selective pursuit of a trophy,

was a necessity to save dwindling wildlife populations. The herds could not sustain the harvest of young and females, but this worked, as did the shift to scientific wildlife management.

The booming entry numbers from 1952 to 1958 and even the 1964 book, which included a significant overhaul of minimum entry scores, showed the system was gaining popularity and acceptance. At this time, the Club began to use the entry requirements to help shape hunters' behavior for

# Fair Chase Since 1887



## ENSURING OUR HUNTING HERITAGE

Within the Boone and Crockett Club's gallery, there is an entire wall dedicated to fair chase. Along with the Fair Chase Entry Affidavit the definition of fair chase is displayed. It states:

Fair chase, as defined by the Boone and Crockett Club, is the ethical, sportsmanlike and lawful pursuit and taking of any free-ranging wild, native North American big game animal in a manner that does not give the hunter an improper advantage over such game animals.

See the complete entry affidavit here:



The B&C Club has long been recognized for its leadership in hunter ethics. Since the B&C Club was founded, our Fair Chase tenets have been cornerstones for the establishment of hunting seasons, bag limits, and the abolishment of market hunting practices nationwide. Changing the culture of the American sportsman was one of the Club's most significant accomplishments.

**BISON**

Informational sign about bison hunting regulations and ethics.

**FAIR CHASE ENTRY AFFIDAVIT**

For the purpose of entry into the Boone and Crockett Club's records, North American big game harvested by the use of the following methods or under the following conditions are ineligible:

- I. Spotting or herding game from the air, followed by landing to no vicinity for the purpose of pursuit and shooting.
- II. Herding or chasing with the aid of any mechanical apparatus.
- III. Use of electronic communication devices to guide hunters to game, artificial lighting, electronic light attracting devices (light vision attract), night vision, heat or electronic range finding, electronic thermal imaging apparatus, electronic game calls or counter/hunter/location tracking devices that transmit signals, and other information to the hunter.
- IV. Conducted by artificial means, including escape-proof leeward enclosures.
- V. Transplanted for the purpose of commercial shooting.
- VI. By the use of traps or pharmaceuticals.
- VII. With assistance, help, or help in any other manner or artificial methods.
- VIII. On another hunter's license.
- IX. Not in full compliance with the game laws or regulations of the Federal Government or of any state, province, territory, or tribal council on reservations or tribal lands.

**FAIR CHASE**, as defined by the Boone and Crockett Club, is the ethical, sportsmanlike and lawful pursuit and taking of any free-ranging wild, native North American big game animal in a manner that does not give the hunter an improper advantage over such game animals.

The Boone and Crockett Club may include the following items in its records if they have been taken in accordance with the Club's definition of fair chase as approved by the Club:

Informational sign with illustrations of various game animals.

Today the Club continues to promote outdoor ethics emphasizing shared use of natural resources to protect wildlife populations, publicly and privately owned habitats, and multiple options for associated outdoor recreational experiences. The Club advocates to all hunters an ethic of respect for wildlife, land, and other users of our shared resources.

different motives. No longer was self-regulation needed to preserve wildlife populations; states had wardens and game departments. Hunters' methods had to be controlled to maintain the support for hunting. At the same time the Club developed its position on planes and hunting, Alaska banned their usage for spotting game.

Since the 1963 addition to the fair chase definition, many new technologies have been addressed by the Club. Each has been discussed in depth at the committee level. As new technologies emerge almost daily, it is becoming apparent that overarching themes must be promoted rather than an individual approach. To these ends, the Club has discussed one angle that perhaps a statement that anything that electronically transmits the live location of game should not be fair chase. This covers using drones, cellular cameras that elicit a real-time response, coordinates from tracking collars to follow game movement, and cell phones or radios guiding hunters to game. But is this too restrictive? Does a range finder not do the same thing? One may ask why we should care at all. Should we create a line, or are hunters thoughtful enough to determine these definitions on their own?

Why does fair chase matter today? It's a question that comes up quite often. If it's legal, shouldn't it be allowed? That, too, is another common question. Even in 1964, Robert Ferguson admitted that ethics couldn't be legislated. But by requiring a hunter to sign the affidavit, perhaps an "unsporting trophy hunter or unscrupulous guide" may be deterred. So why does the Club have sideboards on records entry? Because as hunters, we have a great responsibility to wildlife and its habitat. Every hunting society respected the animals, and this respect was

paramount to their culture. Some groups buried hearts, offered the first bite up to their god(s), or took offense at the waste of anything. The culture of the society you live within defines respect. Hunters must decipher what actions are deemed respectful and ensure those standards are upheld throughout the hunting community. Do we intend to write your code of fair chase? No, but perhaps a basic list of a few tactics that few would argue don't cross the line, like using spotlights for taking game, will motivate an unsporting hunter to consider their actions.

No longer are we in threat of indiscriminately killing off entire species, thanks to modern wildlife management practices. Though if hunting ceases, so will funding for wildlife management. Additionally, poaching is indeed a threat to specific wildlife species. By promoting the code of fair chase, we help folks realize that poachers are not hunters, and hunters were the original conservationists.

Sometimes, a hunting tactic might be legal, but it can also be detrimental to hunting. One only needs to look back a few years to the case of Cecil the lion. This is an extreme example, but what if your kids or grandkids couldn't hunt because a tactic you used or lobbied to legalize changed the opinion (for the worse) of the 70-something percent of U.S. residents who don't hunt? That would be the equivalent of shooting the last bear or moose. What if the technology becomes so advanced that we are guaranteed success every time we draw a tag? Indeed, some East Coast states would rejoice at this technology to save their decorative shrubbery from whitetails. But what about the species in the West, in states where you wait 20 years to hunt a bull elk? Indeed, we all want to fill that Arizona or Utah elk

tag when we draw it, but what if it is at the expense of our kids falling in love with wildlife and the outdoors? What if it takes them eight years after passing hunter safety to draw a tag and put their newly acquired skills and knowledge to the test? What if their first tag is valid for the weekend of a high school dance and they had the best-looking member of the class want to go with them? Will it be too late?

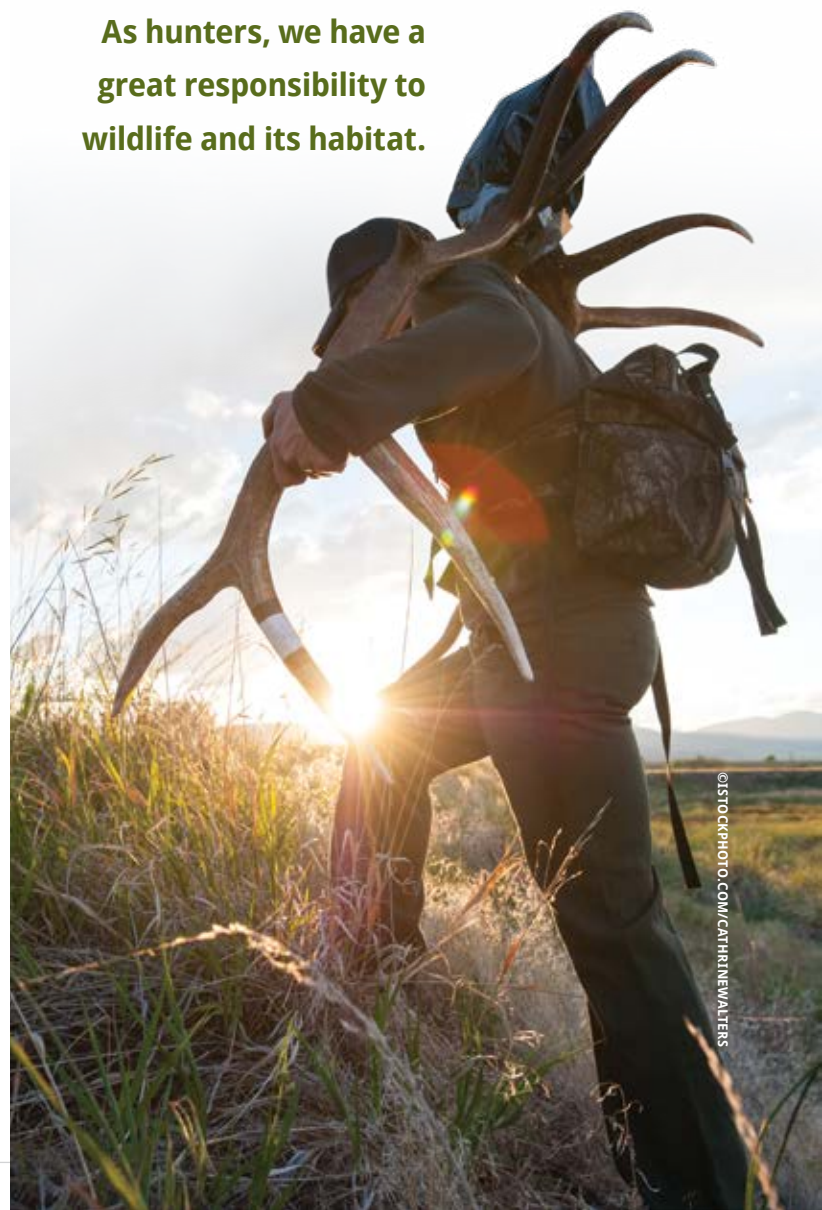
The basis of fair chase is that an animal has a sporting or fair chance to elude the hunter. The idea that hunters are respectful members of society going to the field for admirable reasons is what

the supportive but non-hunting public supports. An affirmation of a code of fair chase ensures this support. So while game laws tell you one buck deer per season is the limit, how you get that deer today matters.

Fair chase is paramount to our way of life's survival. While it is required for a trophy entry, a thoughtful hunter will include its sideboards any time afield. The score has published minimums, but the hunt has requirements as well. Don't forget this part of the message when scoring that deer of a lifetime for a hunter. ■



**As hunters, we have a great responsibility to wildlife and its habitat.**



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# B&C SIGN-UP INCENTIVE PROGRAM LEADER BOARD

Thank you to our Official Measurers for representing the Club at their local sporting shows!



Michael Louis DeAngury (far right) and David Allen (left) — Dixie Deer Classic in Raleigh, North Carolina



Phil Herrnberger (seated) — Erie Sports Show, Erie, Pennsylvania



Bill Bowman (left) and Chad Collins (right) — Midwest Sheep Show, Danville, Indiana

\*As of October 14, 2022

## CONGRATS TO OUR TOP 10 PRIZE WINNERS!

1. Philip A. Herrnberger - 206
2. Stanley Zirbel - 154
3. Bucky Ihlenfeldt - 143
4. Ken Witt - 113
5. Dale Weddle - 65
6. John Bogucki - 46
7. Jerry E. Lunde - 41
8. Robert Wood - 33
9. Eric Stanosheck - 25
10. (tie) Charlie Adams - 23
10. (tie) Matt Olson - 23

SEE THE COMPLETE LISTING IN THE COMMUNITIES SECTION ON OUR WEBSITE.



**EACH TIME AN OM GETS SOMEONE TO JOIN B&C WE PUT A CREDIT BY THEIR NAME!**

### HERE'S THE BREAKDOWN

- 3 Associates - \$25 off any item in the B&C store
- 5 Associates - Buck Knife
- 10 Associates - B&C Boyt sling
- 25 Associates - OM Wool Vest
- 50 Associates - SITKA Gear (value up to \$350)
- 75 Associates - YETI package (value up to \$500)
- 100 Associates - KIMBER RIFLE
- 150 Associates - \$800 Gift card to BASS PRO SHOPS/CABELAS!
- 200 Associates - VORTEX OPTICS GEAR! (value up to \$1400)



DEFEND THE TRUE PURPOSE

Would you like to give an Official Measurer credit for your renewal? Let them know when it is your time to renew and they will provide their OMID number to include with your renewal so they will receive credit.

Want to Become an Official Measurer? Fill out the Official Measurer Application at Boone-Crockett.org!